



## BLACK LEADERSHIP FORUM, INC.

August 3, 2007

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The Honorable Kevin J. Martin  
Chairman

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Federal Communications Commission  
Washington, DC 20554  
Office of the Secretary

On behalf of the Black Leadership Forum, Inc., an alliance of 34 national Black civil rights and civic organizations representing over 10 million African Americans, I write in opposition to the proposed merger of XM satellite radio and Sirius satellite radio. The proposal before the Federal Communications Commission and the United States Department of Justice will have a deleterious effect on consumer protections and competitive entrants into the satellite radio market, particularly for African American consumers and business owners.

Opportunity for African American contractors and consumers has long been negatively impacted by large corporate mergers of American businesses. The proposed XM/Sirius satellite radio merger is no less onerous, as it trammels on the American ideal that Black people should have affordable options in the marketplace and be protected from the menace of marginalization, regardless of their race or resources.

The sole control of currently available radio spectrum—both technologically and legally—would effectively stymie competition for Black-owned businesses. Currently, XM and Sirius use incompatible delivery systems, rendering the possibility of similar programming nearly nil for the coming years. The result would eliminate opportunities for new entrants into the radio marketplace, particularly African American businesses, from fair competition and severely reduce the provision of low-cost satellite packages to subscribers. Since the elimination of a tax incentive for radio ownership of people of color in the 1990's there has been a dismal decrease in racial inclusion in the radio industry. If XM and Sirius were to merge, such a tragedy would worsen.

Culturally, the proposed "a la carte" options offered by XM and Sirius would place Black-owned providers at a competitive disadvantage. For example, under the current choices available with more than one satellite radio provider, a subscriber can "channel surf" and choose a content channel of which they have little knowledge. Conversely, if a monopolistic construct exists with sole control culturally rich satellite radio options would be eliminated from the cadre of choices for consumers.

The American ideal of *I Pluribus Unum* (out of many, one) should not be inaccurately applied to favor monopolies, but rather to the true wealth this nation possesses in the opportunity for racial and ethnic groups to fully participate as consumers and contractors in American industry, particularly the public spectrum of telecommunications.

Therefore, the Black Leadership Forum, Inc. opposes the proposed merger of XM and Sirius satellite radio.

Sincerely,

  
Gary L. Flowers  
Executive Director & CEO

Cc: Commissioner Michael J. Copps  
Commissioner Jonathan S. Adelstein  
Commissioner Deborah Taylor Tate  
Commissioner Robert M. McDowell

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